

MISSOULA
COUNTY



MISSOULA CITY-COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT
HEALTH SERVICES
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EXHIBIT 2
DATE 2/2/09
HB 173

February 2, 2009

The Honorable Jon Sesso, Chairman
House Appropriations Committee
Montana House of Representatives
P.O. 200400
Helena, MT 59620-0400

RE: HB 173 – Sustainable Public Health for All Montanans

Dear Chairman Sesso and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

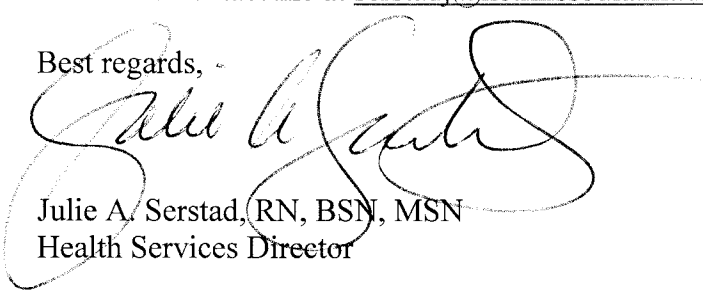
On behalf of the Missoula City-County Health Department, I urge your favorable consideration of HB 173 – Sustainable Public Health for All Montanans. Montana is a vast and beautiful state and all of us deserve access to health and well being. Our local health departments (LHDs) should be able to protect us from health threats, the everyday and the exceptional. However, all LHDs are not equal. Our system is lacking direction because there is no standardization of practice or infrastructure in many health departments across the state.

In 2007, the Montana Public Health Law Modernization Act was passed, which sets the foundation for standardizing the functions for LHDs. If health were a house, public health would be the foundation. We should be able to expect that our health department will protect and improve community well-being by preventing disease, illness and injury and impacting social, economic and environmental factors fundamental to excellent health. The National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO) has developed an *Operational Definition* of what the role and function of a local health department should be. There are 10 Essential Functions, encompassing verbs such as: understand, investigate, prevent, lead, collaborate, monitor, reduce, implement, educate and coordinate. In other words, every health department should be able to say, "We've got your back!"

HB 173 can make that happen. This pilot project in 8 jurisdictions will adopt NACCHO's *Operational Definition* and utilize the *Self Assessment Tool* to determine the current functions provided and what is needed. Public Health Nurses (PHNs) are poised to lead in this endeavor; they are vested in communities, practice prevention, and their community members trust and depend on them.

Montana is unique and we are an independent lot, but we should remember that all Montanans deserve to have access and protection to maintain our health and well being. Thank you for your consideration of HB 173. We look forward to working with you on this and other important public health matters. If you have further questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at serstadj@ho.missoula.mt.us or 258-4986.

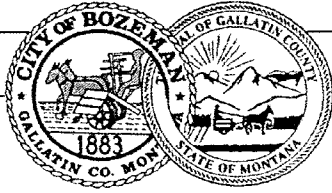
Best regards,



Julie A. Serstad, RN, BSN, MSN
Health Services Director

Cc: House Appropriations Committee

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DATE 2/2/09
HB 173



"Committed to the protection and promotion of public health"

Gallatin City-County Health Department

To: Representative Gordon Hendrick
Representative Dan Villa

From: Stephanie Nelson RN, MSN
Health Officer

Date: February 2, 2008

Re: HB 173 "Sustainable Public Health for all Montanans"

Please accept this letter in support of HB 173. This bill is about improving public health services in an accountable and responsible manner. Over the last 10 years a tremendous amount of work has been done to better understand the essential functions of public health agencies and to create standards for accountability of service. The Functional Operational Definition of a Local Health Department is one example and provides a blueprint for what and how tax dollars should be supporting using these standards.

HB 173 will support the application of these standards in Montana in a limited manner. The lessons learned from this project will be very valuable to policy makers in a rural/frontier state for future decisions related to public health. For these reasons I support HB 173.